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C O N F I D E N T I A L DJIBOUTI 000156

SIPDIS  
DEPARTMENT FOR AF/E, AF/RSA, EAP/J AND PM  
AFRICOM, PACOM, AND CJTF-HOA FOR POLAD  
LONDON, PARIS, ROME FOR AFRICA-WATCHER

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (ADDRESSEES)

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHSA](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [JA](#) [DJ](#) [SO](#) [XA](#)  
SUBJECT: JAPAN SEEKS TO DEPLOY P-3 AIRCRAFT AND SHIPS TO DJIBOUTI FOR  
COUNTER-PIRACY

CLASSIFIED BY: Eric Wong, DCM, U.S. Department of State, U.S. Embassy, Djibo  
uti; REASON: 1.4(A), (B), (D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. Mid-February discussions with visiting Japanese officials--from the Diet, MFA, MOD, and Japanese embassies in Addis Ababa and London--suggest that Japan is preparing to deploy two P-3C maritime patrol aircraft and possibly two JMSDF frigates to Djibouti, in order to support international counter-piracy efforts. As constitutional limits restrict the JMSDF to protecting only "Japanese interests", new legislation would be required; Japanese parliamentarians comprising a delegation that visited CJTF-HOA (the only U.S. military base in Africa) included former defense minister Gen Nakatani and former senior vice minister of foreign affairs Katsuhito Asano. Japanese MFA officials report that Japan may establish a liaison office in Djibouti, and is considering a SOFA with Djibouti. Japanese planners express interest in using U.S. military facilities in Djibouti, but limited ramp space is a constraint; U.S. officials also underscore that Japan must engage in bilateral talks with Djibouti to gain the host government's approval. END SUMMARY.

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P-3 PLANES "ALMOST CERTAIN" TO DEPLOY TO DJIBOUTI  
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¶2. (C) During a February 19 working luncheon with Emboffs, Japanese Ambassador Kinichi Komano (resident in Addis Ababa) said Japan was "almost certain" to deploy P-3 maritime patrol aircraft to Djibouti, to conduct counter-piracy operations. Japan was also deciding where to deploy 2 Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) ships; Komano said he was recommending that both the ships and aircraft deploy to Djibouti, as supporting them would be easier if they were co-located. He expected Japan's Prime Minister to decide in early March, following a report from MFA and MOD technical experts. According to Komano, JMSDF ships would likely arrive first, taking 20 days to travel from Japan to Djibouti. On the other hand, P-3 aircraft would likely not deploy until early May or June.

¶3. (C) Citing constitutional restrictions on the overseas deployment of Japan's military, Komano said he expected the Diet to

draft legislation in early March expanding the limited scope of Japan's "national defense", to allow protection of foreign shipping. Currently, Japan's Self-Defense Force could only protect "Japanese interests," which even under the "most expansionist" interpretation was limited to Japanese ships or sailors, or to goods originating from Japan. It was "almost impossible" to change Japan's constitution, as amendments required approval of two-thirds of the Diet; thus, new legislation was needed, Komano explained.

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JAPAN: STILL DOES NOT RECOGNIZE SOMALI GOVERNMENT  
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¶4. (C) Responding to the observation that Japan had not recognized the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) of Somalia, Amb. Komano explained that Japan was following "the Afghanistan model": i.e., recognition would follow only after "a period" of security. Despite being a major donor country, Japan would not provide financial assistance until a conference on reconstruction was convened, he said. (NOTE: Amb. Komano's previous assignment was as Japan's ambassador to Afghanistan. END NOTE.) Nevertheless, recognizing that President Sheikh Sharif led an expanded administration recognized by the United Nations, the EU, and the United States, Komano said he was recommending to Tokyo that Japan recognize the new government of Somalia. Japan needed to be part of the political process, not just serve as a donor after the fact, he said.

¶5. (C) On other regional issues, Amb. Komano reported the following from his bilateral consultations:

-- Djiboutian Foreign Minister Mohamoud Ali Youssouf had reported that Somali President Sharif had said that parliamentary committees comprised of 30-40 MPs would work on behalf of the entire Somali parliament, as there was no conference building that could accommodate all 500-plus MPs. On the Djibouti-Eritrea border

conflict, Komano noted that Djiboutian President Guelleh had been invited to participate as an observer in Sana'a Forum talks, as the Forum originally comprised countries experiencing tensions with Eritrea (e.g., Ethiopia, Sudan, and Yemen), although Yemen no longer felt threatened by Eritrea.

-- Russian Ambassador Alexander Bregadze said Russia was looking at developing Berbera as one of two possible alternative ports to Djibouti (no explanation was given for this move).

-- Brigadier General Philippe LeFort, Commander of French forces in Djibouti, reportedly said France would seek this year to extend its use of French military bases in Djibouti for another 20-30 years.

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JAPANESE PARLIAMENTARIANS VISIT U.S. MILITARY  
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¶6. (C) In a separate February 11 meeting at the headquarters of the U.S. Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA), Japanese officials (from the Diet, MOD, MFA, and Japanese embassies in London and Addis Ababa) focused on Japan's intent to deploy P-3C aircraft to Djibouti, and asked whether Japanese aircraft could use U.S. facilities in Djibouti. Japanese ships were already deployed in the Indian Ocean in support of counter-terrorism and Operation Enduring Freedom; Japan hoped next to deploy forces to support counter-piracy. Katsuhito Asano, member of Japan's House of Representatives and a former senior vice minister of foreign Affairs, reported that Japan had ninety (90) P-3C aircraft, most of which were deployable.

¶7. (C) While responding that Japan's request for P-3C assistance would be conveyed to the Department and to AFRICOM, U.S. officials noted that although ramp space was being expanded, work would not be completed until the end of 2009; U.S. facilities in Djibouti were already at maximum capacity with existing aircraft, and other space available belonged to the Government of Djibouti.

¶8. (C) Asano said the principal purpose of the delegation's visit to Djibouti was to prepare the way for bilateral Japan-Djibouti talks: the delegation had already met with President Guelleh and Foreign Minister Youssouf. Asano concluded by noting that the

delegation would meet the CTF-151 (counter-piracy) task force commander, and by expressing hope that the United States would implement intelligence-sharing with Japanese forces. (NOTE: In addition to Asano, the delegation also included former defense minister Gen Nakatani and Shigeki Sato, both ruling Liberal Democratic Party members of the House of Representatives, as well as senior research officer Shigenobu Tamura of the LDP Policy Research Council. END NOTE.)

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JAPAN CONSIDERING MILITARY LIAISON OFFICE IN DJIBOUTI  
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¶9. (C) In a February 12 meeting with DCM and Emboffs, Japanese MFA officials reported that Japan was considering establishing a liaison office in Djibouti. According to Makita Shimokawa, Director of the National Security Policy Division in the MFA's Foreign Policy Bureau, the liaison office could comprise a political officer and a defense attache. MFA First Africa Division officer Masakazu Hisaeda said Japan currently had no plans to establish a full-fledged embassy in Djibouti; Japan's embassy in Addis Ababa covered Ethiopia, Somalia, and Djibouti, whereas other Japanese embassies in Africa typically covered 5-7 countries.

¶10. (C) Shimokawa said the Japanese defense ministry was considering deploying two frigates, and between two to three P-3C aircraft, to either Djibouti, Yemen, or Oman. The JMSDF had dispatched technical fact-finding teams to the region, to examine options for both air and naval operations. Shimokawa, who stated his portfolio included responsibility for the deployment of Japan Self-Defense Forces outside the Japan-U.S. alliance, said Japan sought a cooperative framework with the United States: Japan was currently participating in CTF-150 (counter-terrorism), and needed

to work on engagement with AFRICOM.

¶11. (C) Shimokawa said he had met with the Djiboutian MFA's director of bilateral affairs to discuss a possible status of forces agreement (SOFA). The GODJ sought to include a clause on assistance to the Djibouti military--not from Japan's MOD but from the Ministry of Transport, to build capacity for developing a coast guard, and to support the establishment of an IMO maritime training center. Shimokawa noted that Japan lacked a mechanism such as Foreign Military Financing (FMF) for foreign military cooperation; Japanese constitutional limits may even forbid training of foreign troops, he said.

¶12. (C) COMMENT. Japanese proposals to deploy military assets and possibly establish a liaison office in Djibouti would significantly enlarge Japanese engagement in the Horn of Africa. Japan currently has no diplomatic representation in Djibouti (except for a sole Djiboutian businessman who serves as honorary consul); however, Japan sends 2-3 Djiboutian officials annually to study in Japan, and has several JICA volunteers working in Djibouti. China has a small embassy in Djibouti but has financed several high-profile construction projects (e.g., the foreign ministry headquarters, convention hall, and stadium); Korea (which has also sent representatives to Djibouti to examine possible counter-piracy deployments) currently only has a single liaison officer seconded to CJTF-HOA. The possible deployment of East Asian counter-piracy assets to Djibouti (and their desire to use U.S. military facilities) would be a counterpoint to the growing number of EU naval forces in Djibouti currently using French facilities. END COMMENT.

WONG

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